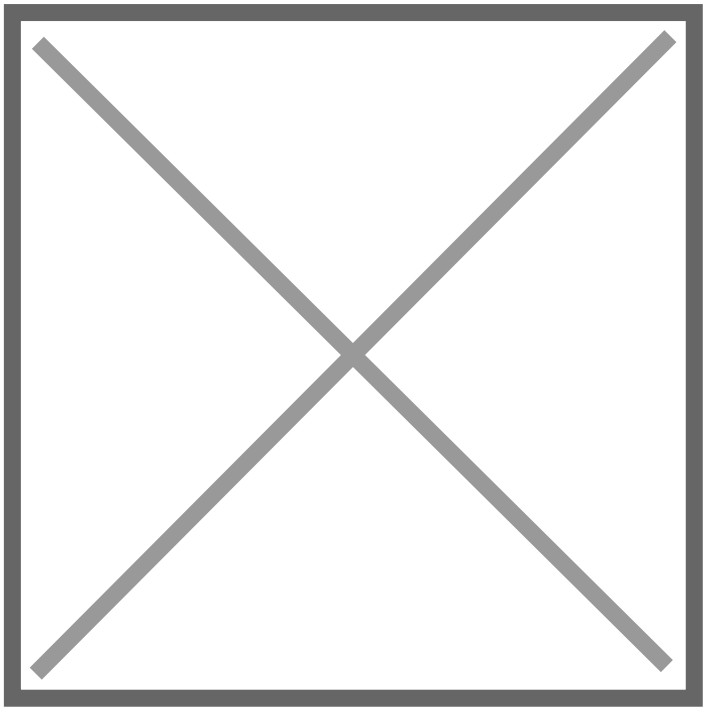
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The Bio-manufacturing giant

21 July 2003 | News



Like most successful companies, Sartorius India too started in a small way and worked its way up. Today it is among a select few companies which manufactures bioreactors used widely in the biotech industry. Its contributions were recognized when it was recently given the first Rabo India Bio Business award for the Best Exporter.

The quest for excellence began in 1991, when SFS Technologies, started virtually out of a garage by Cherian Philip, struck a technical and financial partnership with the Sartorius group of Germany. The company started with the aim to make a mark as a synonym for India's excellence in the engineering sector.

Today this foresight is paying Sartorius rich dividends, making it the only Indian company manufacturing bioreactors. And it has few competitors across the world. It acts as a single-window solution provider for pharma-bio process engineering, bioreactor design and engineering, membrane and separation technology, quality control expertise, validation process optimization and weighing technology.

The Indian unit further enjoys the status of being one of the three system manufacturing facilities of Sartorius worldwide, after Germany and the US. The company exports its high quality products all over the world.

The Sartorius India team has a strong entrepreneurial streak and a technically sound engineering service group. The company's success is also attributed to a large extent to its fluid organizational structure and initiative for partnering and outsourcing. These qualities help it react fast to tap various opportunities in the market place.

In the last two years Sartorius has completed several complex biotech projects with companies such as Biological E, Lupin Chemicals, Alembic & Zydus Cadila on the home front, in addition to tapping a highly demanding export market.

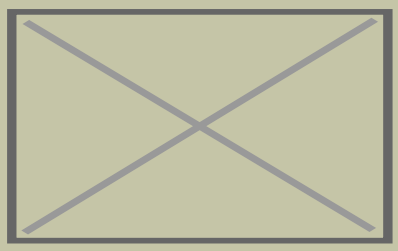
Sartorius India has grown, leveraging its experience with the pharma-biotech industry to manufacture state-of-the-art bio-reactors, upstream and downstream equipment for R&D. It mainly works in the design, manufacture, implementation, commissioning and participates in the initial production process for clients within a tight time frame.

Now Sartorius has three units in BangaloreÃ¢â?¬â?•one manufacturing center and two testing centers in Peenya. Sartorius is also planning to tap the food and beverages market in a big way. To begin, the group has acquired a German-based food and beverages company, Diessal, to offer best quality products for people in India.

"The actual boss is knowledge and whoever contributes to it benefits the business."

Dr Anil Paul Kariath, chief operating officer of Sartorius India Pvt Ltd, has over 25 years of experience in the biotechnology industry. Prior to his stint with Sartorius, he was with Indian Immunologicals where he set up a vaccine plant in collaboration with the Wellcome Foundation, UK. At Indian Immunologicals, he had worked in various disciplines such as quality control, production, process development, R&D and technical services. Since 1998, he has been associated with Sartorius India in developing fermentation and bioprocess equipment indigenously and specialized in design, manufacture and validation of bio-equipment. A postgraduate from Animal Biotechnology Center, Cambridge, he later did research at the Animal Virus Research Institute at Pirbright, UK. He has to his credit more than 20 publications in various journals of repute including the manual for vaccine production. Dr Kariath explains about the company's efforts in bio-manufacturing and processing. Excerpts:

How did Sartorius India start? Who was the person behind this effort?



Our former managing director, Cherian Philip, who is also a direct shareholder of the company, started Sartorius India. With his experience in the field of selling filters for biotech companies, he realized that India had the potential to contribute globally to the biotech-engineering sector. Thus in 1991, Sartorius started its operation, in India as an engineering unit to ensure value addition to the products which were imported from Germany. During that time, the cost of engineering products from Germany was so high that it was not very affordable to the pharma industry in India. The immediate objective was to meet the customer requirement in terms of cost effectiveness. But then, he found that the company per se was only working in certain pockets of the total value chain. To tap the entire value chain , the company needed professionals. That was the time when I joined the company. It was in the year 1997.

The initial target of Sartorius India was to manufacture equipment required by the pharma and biotech industry within 12 months. The German head office did not appreciate this. A year down the line, it realized that what we were doing was the right thing and it decided to come into this business. That was a transfer of business opportunities from India back to Germany. It decided to amalgamate the two companies for better results.

What are the core activities that Sartorius is involved in? How does Sartorius India differ from Sartorius Germany?

The German company has been in existence for 130 years but did not move from its core activity of making filters and weighing balances. After getting the idea of value addition from Sartorius India, it acquired more than 10 companies all over the world. Realizing that the work in fermentation is highly skilled and knowledge-based and not easily available all over the world, Sartorius started a foray into the food market. In 1998, Sartorius made a serious attempt and recognized it as a huge market. Over 70 percent of the total turnover of the company is now from the food market. Also we came to realize that we could send people from India out to fill the gap in knowledge. The German headquarters asked for people and we sent about 10 people there who met the technical requirements.

We are concentrating mainly on the software, automation, validation and documentation areas. Today, we serve our group globally.

You have won the first Rabo India Bio Business Best Exporter award. What is the marketing strategy adopted by Sartorius?

We are very proud about the award. Our strategy is to provide our customers the equipment in the shortest possible time at a price that is affordable. In the pharma and biotech sectors, the time for marketing an instrument is a key point. We are providing our customers this facility of quick delivery and our clients have that confidence in us. All this pride comes from the strength of the people. Our workers are very much dedicated and the teamwork brings us the pride. I believe teamwork is everything. And there is no differentiation between the workers and the boss. The actual boss is knowledge and whoever contributes in this process benefits the business. The company today exports more than 80 percent of its equipment to countries like US, Taiwan, Korea, Australia and Germany.

How do you see the future of biotechnology in India?

In India there is always the possibility of finding the resources to work and do it much easier and faster. There is no lack of it. India is a country which is very strong in engineering and engineering subcontract, except in logistics and infrastructure.

Our government is giving a good support. For the last 2-3 years, we have not found a single hurdle created by the government and this is without having to pay anything extra. The role that government is playing in this export sector is helping us to increase our efficiency. For example, within 24 hours, they issued us an advance license for importing the food items for manufacturing exports. That's a record time. In Bangalore, the customs, excise people and the director general of foreign trade are extremely exportersfriendly.

Roby Ajith